

TWO IMAGES OF THE VIRGIN
IN THE
DUMBARTON OAKS COLLECTION

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At no time, in the course of Byzantine history, were images—their nature, function, and purpose—so consistently and so widely discussed as during the period of over a hundred years when, except for a short interval, the representation of sacred images was forbidden. The texts gathered for the second Council of Nicaea in 787, the writings of the foremost defenders of images, like John of Damascus, the Patriarch Germanus, Theodore the Studite, and the Patriarch Nicephorus, the discussions which continued even after the triumph of orthodoxy have all been carefully investigated. Within the last years important studies by A. Grabar and P. J. Alexander have further contributed to our understanding of this crucial period of Byzantine history.¹ The art historian who tries to grasp the Byzantine conception of the image must constantly refer to these texts, since it is only by realizing what ideas the artist, and, even more, the Church wished to convey that he can hope to approach a correct interpretation. My purpose is not to consider this question in its more general implications, but by selecting specific examples from the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, namely, a few images of the Virgin, to attempt to show particular aspects of the religious art of the Middle Byzantine period.

As is well known, christological arguments dominated the discussions of both Iconoclasts and Iconodules, especially after the Council of 754 when they were formulated by Constantine V against the images of Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation was the crucial point, and given this emphasis it was only natural that after the victory of the Iconodules, next to the images of Christ Himself, those of the Virgin should be most frequently represented. This was, of course, no new departure; the Virgin's image had figured in a prominent place in the churches of the pre-Iconoclastic period as well as on icons, and other works of art. It is quite significant, nevertheless, that in the period immediately following the triumph of the Orthodox the images of the Virgin should have been among the very first to be represented. Michael III, resuming the practice of pre-iconoclastic emperors, placed the image of the Virgin on his seals.² The patriarchs adopted this same practice; Photius seems to have been the first to use the image of the Virgin,³ but from that period on she appears almost invariably on the patriarchal seals.⁴ In the Chrysotriclinium of the Imperial palace, decorated anew by Michael III, "above the entrance, like a

¹ André Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Dossier archéologique* (Paris, 1957). P. J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople; Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958).

² N. P. Likhachev, "Nekotorye starejšie tipy pečati vizantijskikh imperatorov," *Numismaticheskij Sbornik*, I (Moscow, 1911), pp. 497–539. A. Grabar, *op. cit.*, figs. 52–56. J. Ebersolt, "Sceaux byzantins du Musée de Constantinople," *Revue numismatique*, XVIII (1914), pp. 210–211. The image of the Virgin and child still appears on a seal of Leo III stamped during the early years of his reign: N. Likhachev, "Sceaux de l'empereur Leon III l'Isaurien," *Byzantion*, XI (1936), pp. 473–474.

³ A. Grabar, *op. cit.*, figs. 58–59.

⁴ N. P. Likhachev, "Pečati patriarchov konstantinopol'skikh," *Trudy Moskov. Numism. Obshchestva*, II (1899), pp. 43–66.

holy door," was "imaged the Virgin,"⁵ facing the enthroned Christ placed above the emperor's throne. This metaphor of the holy door recurs in the verses inscribed in the church of the Blachernae: "The house of the Virgin, like her Son, was destined to become a second gate of God. An ark hath appeared holier than that of old, not containing the tables written by God's hand but having received within it God Himself."⁶

The church erected in 864 by Michael III within the Palace—which, as has now been proved, should not be confused with the Nea⁷—was dedicated to the Virgin, and she was represented in the apse "stretching out her stainless arms on our behalf and winning for the emperor safety and exploits against the foes."⁸ The first image to be restored in the church of Hagia Sophia was that of the Virgin; in the homily delivered at its dedication, Photius stressed the importance of the event by stating: "If one called this day the beginning and day of Orthodoxy (lest I say something excessive), one would not be far wrong."⁹

The Virgin was the principal protectress of Constantinople which came to be considered as her own city par excellence. The liturgists, followed by the chroniclers and historians, believed that it had been dedicated to her at the time of its foundation.¹⁰ It was the Virgin who guarded it from invaders; the synaxary of the fifth Sunday of Lent recalls the three sieges of Constantinople which failed, thanks to her intervention, namely, the siege by the Avars in 626 and those by the Arabs in 677 and 717–718.¹¹ The Virgin again saved her city from the Russian attack of 860. In the second of the two homilies delivered on this occasion Photius speaks in moving terms of the prayers addressed to her, when "denuded of all help, and deprived of human alliance, we were spiritually led on by holding fast to our hopes in the Mother of the Word, our God, urging her to implore her Son, invoking her for the expiation of our sins, her intercession for our salvation, her protection as an impregnable wall for us, begging her to break the boldness of the barbarians, her to crush their insolence, her to defend the despairing people and fight for her own flock."¹² The precious relic, the mantle of the Virgin which was kept in the church of the Blachernae, was carried in solemn procession. "It embraced the walls, and the foes inexplicably showed their backs; the city put it around itself, and . . . the enemy were deprived of the hopes which bore them on. For, immediately as the Virgin's garment went round the walls, the barbarians gave up the siege and broke camp."¹³

⁵ *The Greek Anthology*, with an English translation by W. R. Paton, I (London, 1927), p. 47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁷ R. J. H. Jenkins and C. A. Mango, "The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9–10 (1955–1956), pp. 123–140.

⁸ *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, English Translation, Introduction and Commentary by Cyril Mango (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 188.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

¹⁰ A. Frolov, "La dédicace de Constantinople dans la tradition byzantine," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, CXXVII (1944), pp. 61–127. For the Virgin's role see also the article "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople" in N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and other Essays* (London, 1955), pp. 243–260.

¹¹ A. Frolov, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–97.

¹² *The Homilies of Photius*, p. 102.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.

The most striking examples of the honor paid to the Virgin as protectress of the Empire and *triumphatrix* appear in connection with the triumphal entries of the emperors after their victorious campaigns. When John Tzimisces returned in 971 from his Bulgarian expedition, he was met at the Golden Gate, as was customary on such occasions, by the magistrates and dignitaries who brought the chariot, prepared for the Emperor, and presented him with gold crowns and a sceptre. John refused to mount the chariot, reserving the honors of the triumph for the Virgin. The city witnessed then the most amazing procession; the imperial chariot advanced, bearing in great pomp an icon of the Virgin which had been captured in Bulgaria; behind it came the Emperor on a white steed, followed by the Bulgarian ruler and the army.¹⁴ Similar triumphal entries took place under John and Manuel Comnenus who, following the example of John Tzimisces, placed in their chariot an image of the Virgin to whom they attributed their victories.¹⁵ When Michael Palaeologus arrived in Constantinople in 1261 he was met at the Golden Gate by the clergy carrying the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, and he entered the reconquered capital, walking barefoot behind the miraculous image.¹⁶

Works of art show the increasingly important place that images of the Virgin occupy in imperial as well as in religious iconography. Under Leo VI, whose special veneration for the Theotokos is manifest in his homilies, her image appears for the first time on the reverse of Byzantine coins.¹⁷ It is also on an ivory depicting Leo VI that we see for the first time the Emperor crowned by the Virgin.¹⁸ The Virgin acts as an intermediary; although it is she who places on the Emperor's head the crown, symbol of his power, the investiture is conferred by Christ who is portrayed on the other side of the ivory. The Virgin's role as intercessor is recalled in the Book of Ceremonies, in the description of the ritual that followed important receptions. After the acclamations of the two factions, the herald of the chamber advanced to the bronze barrier in front of the throne and read the following words from the book he held in his hands: "May our almighty and most compassionate God, who has crowned you through the intercession of His immaculate mother, grant us the favor of celebrating in peace . . . these happy days, for many years to come."¹⁹

The iconographic type of the Virgin crowning the emperor—without the accompanying archangel—was transferred to coins, and one is not surprised to see it for the first time on the solidi of John Tzimisces who had reserved to the Virgin the honors of his triumph.²⁰ The hand of God, depicted above the two figures, makes it quite clear that Christ or God is the ultimate

¹⁴ Leo Diaconus, Bonn, p. 158; Cedrenus, Bonn, II, p. 413; Zonaras, Bonn, III, pp. 535–536.

¹⁵ Nicetas Choniates, Bonn, pp. 26 and 204.

¹⁶ Georgius Acropolites, Bonn, pp. 196–197; Nicephorus Gregoras, Bonn, I, p. 87.

¹⁷ Solidus with the bust of the Virgin orans. W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, II (London, 1908), p. 444; also A. Voirol, "Die ersten Darstellungen von Christus und von Maria auf byzantinischen Münzen," *Schweizer Münzblätter* (Dec. 1958), pp. 113–117.

¹⁸ A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936), pp. 116–117, pl. xxiv, 1. A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, II (Berlin, 1934), pl. xxxv, fig. 88.

¹⁹ Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, *Le Livre des Cérémonies*, ed. A. Vogt, II (Paris, 1939), p. 92.

²⁰ Wroth, *op. cit.*, pl. LIV, 10–12.

source of all earthly power, but the role of the Virgin is none the less important. The coins of Romanus III show a remarkable variety of types: the Virgin crowning the Emperor; the bust of the Virgin orans with or without the medallion of Christ; and the standing Virgin carrying the infant Christ on her left arm.²¹

This last type reproduced the famous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria which was the object of special veneration by the Byzantines. It was supposed to have been painted by Saint Luke and to have been sent by the Empress Eudocia to her sister-in-law, the Empress Pulcheria, who deposited it in the church she erected for this purpose. Hidden during the Iconoclastic period, it had miraculously escaped destruction, and it is this type that Michael III and Photius stamped on their seals. This must also have been the type represented at Hagia Sophia, for Photius describes the image as that of "a virgin mother carrying in her pure arms, for the common salvation of our kind, the common Creator reclining as an infant" and fondly turning "her eyes on her begotten Child in the affection of her heart."²²

The Hodegetria is the central figure in the ivory relief of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, a work which exhibits the finest qualities of the sculpture of the tenth century (fig. 1).²³ The ivory has been cut off between the figures, as can clearly be seen from the rear view, leaving undamaged the figures themselves except for the right hand of the bishop; the continuous pedestal on which the three figures stand is also part of the original panel.

The presence of the two side figures, John the Baptist on the left and a holy bishop on the right, differentiates this relief from all other ivories of the same group in which the Hodegetria appears alone,²⁴ and gives a particular meaning to this composition. In the pre-Iconoclastic period, as well as in later centuries, the Virgin enthroned in majesty, holding the Christ child on her knees was frequently represented surrounded by angels and by saints; the latter, usually standing full face, often introduced the donors. On the relief the two saints are turned towards the central figure, their hands raised in the gesture of supplication or prayer, and the compositional scheme repeats that of the well-known theme of the Deesis. But, whereas in the Deesis John the Baptist and the Virgin stand at the sides of Christ, here John and the holy bishop address their supplications to the Theotokos.

The supreme role of the Virgin as mediatrix between Christ and mankind

²¹ Virgin crowning the emperor; seated Christ on the reverse: Wroth, *op. cit.*, pl. LVII, 13; bust of the Virgin holding the medallion of the infant Christ, attributed by Wroth to Romanus IV, pl. LXII, 2; for the correct attribution see Ph. Grierson, "The Debasement of the Bezant in the Eleventh Century," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 47 (1954), p. 383. In a forthcoming study Mr. Grierson also attributes to Romanus III the small silver coin with the bust of the Virgin orans and the larger silver coin with the Hodegetria on the reverse (Wroth, *op. cit.*, pl. LXII, 3 and 2). I wish to thank him for letting me see the manuscript of his article.

²² *Homilies*, p. 290.

²³ Hayford Peirce and Royall Tyler, "An Ivory of the Xth Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 2 (1941), pp. 11-18, figs. 1-2.

²⁴ For the ivories of Hamburg, Utrecht, and the Metropolitan Museum see *ibid.*, figs. 4-5 and 7. The ivory background is preserved only in the Utrecht Virgin. See also the ivory of the Victoria and Albert Museum: A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann., *op. cit.*, II, pl. XXI, fig. 51.

had been increasingly stressed by the writers of the eighth and ninth centuries, for instance, Andrew of Crete, the Patriarch Germanus, Theodore the Studite, and the Patriarch Nicephorus. The Virgin's mediation is most effective, they said, not only because she is "holier than the saints, higher than the heavens, more glorious than the cherubim, more honorable than the seraphim and more venerable than all creatures," but also because of her maternal authority. Christ could not but listen to the entreaties of His mother.²⁵ This same idea finds its expression in the ivory relief: the prayers are addressed to the mother and, through her mediation to the Incarnate God, represented as a child, that is, in the form in which the mystery of the Incarnation as well as the role of the mother could be most clearly shown.

On several icons at Mount Sinai which belong to the Middle Byzantine period, a prophet or other saint stands in an attitude of supplication next to the Virgin who holds the Christ child before her breast.²⁶ On others which, compositionally, are closer to the ivory relief, the Virgin stands between two interceding saints.²⁷ The accompanying figures differ in these various examples. I shall confine myself to the Dumbarton Oaks relief where the idea of the Incarnation has been emphasized through the accompanying figures.

The Byzantine theologians explained that God granted to the prophets, through visions, the foreknowledge of the Incarnation, and after the Incarnation He who was invisible even to the immaterial angels became visible to mortal man.²⁸ John the Baptist stands here, to the left of the Virgin, as the last of the prophets and the first witness of the Incarnation, a witness even before Christ's birth. For, as Theodore the Studite explains in his homily on the Beheading of John the Baptist, John rejoiced even in his mother's womb when he heard Mary's salutation to Elizabeth, and although as yet devoid of speech, he could exclaim: "I cry out, because I perceive that the only begotten Son of the Father has become incarnate. I leap because I perceive that the Redeemer of the world has taken human form."²⁹

The earliest surviving example in which John the Baptist as witness of the Incarnation is associated with the Virgin is an ampulla at Bobbio. In this composition, which differs from the representations on all the other ampullae, the Ascension occupies the upper part, while the Virgin orans, between John the Baptist and his father Zacharias, and two angels fill the lower half. The large star above the head of the Virgin, the inscription on the scroll held by John—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John I:29)—make it evident that the symbolism of the Incarnation has been combined here with that of the Redemption. As A. Grabar has pointed

²⁵ See, for instance, Andrew of Crete, *PG* 97, col. 1107; Germanus, *PG* 98, cols. 308 C, 320 B, 352 A, 380 D; Theodore, *PG* 99, col. 1528 C; Nicephorus, *PG* 100, col. 341 C.

²⁶ G. and M. Soteriou, *Εἰκόνες τῆς μονῆς Σινῆς*, I (Athens, 1956), fig. 163; O. Wulff and M. Alpatoff, *Denkmäler der Ikonenmalerei* (Hellerau bei Dresden, 1925), fig. 49.

²⁷ G. and M. Soteriou, *op. cit.*, fig. 177, Virgin between John the Baptist and Saint George; fig. 158, Virgin between Moses and Saint Euthymius of Jerusalem; fig. 164, Virgin between Joachim and Anna.

²⁸ See, for instance, Theodore the Studite in his homily on the Celestial host: *PG* 99, col. 736 D.

²⁹ *PG* 99, col. 756 D.

out, John and Zacharias have been selected to accompany the Virgin as "the last in date of the prophets of the Salvation who stand on the threshold of the age of the Incarnation."³⁰ On a Carolingian ivory book cover in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which is based on an East Christian model, the Virgin enthroned with the Christ Child again appears between John the Baptist and Zacharias.³¹ A later and, unfortunately, badly damaged example of these witnesses of the Incarnation may be seen in the church of Qeledjlar in Cappadocia: the standing Virgin, holding the Christ Child before her breast is painted in the center of the small apse of the prothesis; Zacharias stands on the right, as on the Bobbio ampulla and the ivory book cover; the corresponding figure at the left has been destroyed, but it surely represented John the Baptist.³² In all other surviving examples John is not accompanied by his father. In the arch over the apse of the chapel of San Zeno in Santa Prassede in Rome he stands alone, facing the Virgin; the mosaic is greatly restored but one can faintly distinguish the disk with the lamb which adorns the cross held by John the Baptist.³³ The reference to the Incarnation is clearer in the mosaic on the wall above the northern apse of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo. John the Baptist standing next to the Hodegetria, as on the Dumbarton Oaks ivory, holds a scroll bearing the same inscription as on the Bobbio ampulla.³⁴ On an icon of the Palaeologan period in the monastery τῶν Βλαττάδων in Thessalonica, the bust figure of the Hodegetria is flanked by an angel and by John the Baptist, again holding a scroll with the same inscription.³⁵

As E. Kitzinger and A. Xyngopoulos have pointed out in their respective studies of the mosaics of the Cappella Palatina and the icon of Thessalonica, the representation of the images of the Virgin and John the Baptist in the prothesis connect this composition with the rite of the Proskomide, the preparation of the Eucharist, which takes place in the prothesis. This liturgical connection also explains the presence on our ivory of the bishop on the right, next to the Virgin.

This figure has sometimes been identified as John Chrysostom;³⁶ John the Baptist having opposite him his namesake, the great Patriarch of Constantinople. But the well-established iconographic type of John Chrysostom, with a high bulging forehead and short beard, differs from the figure on the right, and comparison of our ivory with contemporary examples on which the names of the saints are inscribed (fig. 5), leaves no room for doubt that the saint on the

³⁰ A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza-Bobbio)* (Paris, 1958), p. 61; description on pp. 43-44, pl. LIII.

³¹ Margaret L. Longhurst, *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory* (London, 1927), pp. 62-63 and fig. 138.

³² G. de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, I (Paris, 1925), p. 203 and p. 204, note 1, pl. 54.

³³ Photo Alinari, no. 26715. J. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1917), p. 929. R. Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, IV (Prato, 1877), pl. 288.

³⁴ E. Kitzinger, "The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo," *Art Bulletin*, XXXI (1949), pp. 273-274, fig. 14.

³⁵ A. Xyngopoulos, "Une icône byzantine à Thessalonique," *Cahiers archéologiques*, III (1948), pp. 114-128.

³⁶ H. Peirce and R. Tyler, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

right of our ivory is Basil the Great of Caesarea, always represented with a long beard and thick hair falling low down on his forehead.³⁷

In the rite of the Proskomide, the priest first cuts out of the prosphora, or eucharistic bread, the central part bearing Christ's seal which is called the *Amnos*, or Lamb, and in detaching this part he says: "The Lamb of God is sacrificed. He who taketh away the sin of the world, for the life and salvation of the world," referring to the passage from the Gospel of John which we saw inscribed on the scroll held by John the Baptist in the examples mentioned above. He then detaches other parts, consecutively, in honor of the Virgin, of the archangels, of John the Baptist and other prophets, of the apostles, the Church Fathers and other saints. In commemorating the Church Fathers, Saint Basil is mentioned first, as he is also in the litanies.³⁸

A miniature in an eleventh-century Psalter of the Pantocrator monastery on Mount Athos, no. 49, gives an almost exact illustration of this rite, represented in a symbolic manner (fig. 4). The Virgin carrying the child is flanked by an angel and John the Baptist, who holds the scroll with the usual inscription; below appear three of the Church Fathers, Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom.³⁹ A variant of the same composition occurs in a Psalter of slightly later date in Berlin; John the Baptist has been omitted, the Virgin stands between two archangels, and the bishops depicted below are Nicholas of Myra, John Chrysostom, and Basil.⁴⁰

The ivory group of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection is an important example of the manner in which a profound theological conception may be expressed through an apparently simple composition. The symbolism of the Incarnation, combined with that of the Redemption, as on the Bobbio ampulla, is here illustrated in a different manner, by recalling the eucharistic sacrifice. The role of the Virgin as mediatrix, clearly shown through the gestures of intercession of the accompanying figures, was also mentioned during the rite of the Proskomide when in detaching the fragment in honor of the Virgin, the priest said, "through her intercession, receive O Lord, this offering on your celestial altar."⁴¹

The Byzantines took pride in the possession of two precious relics of the Virgin—her mantle or maphorion kept in the church of the Blachernae, already mentioned above, and her girdle, the ζώνη, preserved in the church of the Chalkoprateia, near Hagia Sophia. These inviolable treasures, which the Virgin had granted to her own city, were the lasting pledge of her protection against all dangers. According to one tradition, the girdle, enclosed in a reliquary (ῥ

³⁷ A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *op. cit.*, II, figs. 31, 32b, 33, 72a, 111a. K. Weitzmann has also identified the bishop as Saint Basil; cf. his review in *Art Bulletin*, XXV (1943) p. 164.

³⁸ F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896), pp. 357–358.

³⁹ V. Lasareff, "Studies in the Iconography of the Virgin," *Art Bulletin*, XX (1938), p. 37 and fig. 7.

⁴⁰ G. Stuhlfauth, "A Greek Psalter with Byzantine Miniatures," *Art Bulletin*, XV (1933), p. 318 and fig. 7. The inscription written above and below the miniature reads: "They took their position beside the Mother in awe of the Logos, the generals of the incorporeal souls. The foremost of the prelates, all three of them, holding the inspired books in their hands."

⁴¹ Brightman, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

ἀγία σορός) had been deposited in the church of the Chalkoprateia by the Emperor Arcadius. In the last years of the ninth century, when Zoe Zaoutzina, the second wife of Leo VI, fell ill, the reliquary was opened, the girdle was taken to the palace, the Empress was healed, and the girdle replaced in the reliquary. When the reliquary was opened there was found in it the document which testified that the girdle had been deposited in the σορός by Arcadius.⁴²

Neither in the account of the anonymous English pilgrim who at the end of the twelfth century saw the silver reliquary on the altar of the church of the Chalkoprateia, nor in the Book of Ceremonies which describes the visits of the Emperor to this church on the feasts of the Annunciation and the Nativity of the Virgin, nor in the homilies on the ὥνη, is there any mention of the icon of the Virgin. However, there is good reason for associating with the Chalkoprateia, as Likhachev, Kondakov, and others have done, the iconographic type which on the seals bears the name Hagiosoritissa, the Virgin of the Holy Soros or reliquary.⁴³ There are several variants of this type; the Virgin standing, turned to the right or to the left, raises her hands in a gesture of intercession or prayer to the bust of Christ depicted in a segment of sky (fig. 3); or only the half figure is represented in the same attitude, praying to Christ or to the hand of God emerging from the segment of sky. The half figure is more frequently represented on small objects and icons; for instance, on a bloodstone cameo at Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 2) or on the Byzantine enamel reliquary at Maestricht where the bust figure of Christ has been represented as on the seals with the standing Virgin.⁴⁴ The half figure type of the Hagiosoritissa enjoyed great popularity and was copied both in the West and in the East, beyond the actual frontiers of the Byzantine Empire. The image at Sta Maria in Aracoeli in Rome is one of the numerous Italian examples, the original of which was attributed to Saint Luke.⁴⁵ In Georgia the central figure of the famous icon of the monastery of Khakhuli⁴⁶ repeats this same type which is also frequently represented in Russian art. The full figure occurs rarely on small objects, but we have an example in the bloodstone cameo in the Walters Art Gallery; the Virgin stands praying turned to the right, but neither the bust of Christ nor the Hand of God has been represented.⁴⁷

The stone relief of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, on which the Virgin stands in the same attitude as the Hagiosoritissa type, turned slightly to the

⁴² Menologium, PG CXVII, col. 613. Homily of St. Euthymius on the Girdle in *Patrologia Orientalis*, XVI (1922), p. 511.

⁴³ N. P. Likhachev, *Istoricheskoe znachenie italo-grecheskoj ikonopisi. Izobrazhenija Bogomateri* (St. Petersburg, 1911), pp. 56–63 and pl. VIII, 1–6. N. P. Kondakov, *Ikonografija Bogomateri*, II (St. Petersburg, 1915), pp. 294–315. The Hagiosoritissa is also represented on some coins of the Comnenian period: Tommaso Bertele, "La Vergine aghiosoritissa nella numismatica bizantina," *Revue des études byzantines*, XVI (1958), pp. 233–234.

⁴⁴ *De Monumenten van Geschiedenis en Kunst in de Provincie Limburg. De monumenten in de Gemeente Maestricht*, I, 4 ('s Gravenhage, 1938), p. 550, fig. 517.

⁴⁵ Luigi Grassi, "La Madonna di Aracoeli e le traduzioni romane del suo tema iconografico," *Rivista di archaeologia cristiana*, XVIII (1941), pp. 65–96.

⁴⁶ B. Amiranashvili, *Beka Opizari* (Tiflis, 1956), pp. 42–43.

⁴⁷ *Early Christian and Byzantine Art. An Exhibition Held at the Baltimore Museum of Art* (Baltimore, 1947), pl. LXXVIII, no. 555.

right and with both hands raised, presents an interesting problem (fig. 6).⁴⁸ Since the pose is the same as that of the Virgin in the Deesis group, and since neither the hand of God nor the bust figure of Christ has been included, one may wonder whether this slab was not originally one of three slabs which, placed together, formed the Deesis, that is, a composition similar to the reliefs in the southern aisle of San Marco in Venice.⁴⁹ However, as far as one can tell from the few surviving examples, when individual slabs were intended to be placed next to one another, there was no frame, as at San Marco, or the frame was very shallow and the figures even encroached upon it somewhat so that the unity of the group was not interrupted; while in the single icon-relief, like the beautiful Orans Virgin from Gülhane in the Archaeological Museum in Constantinople, or other similar panels, the frame is much deeper.⁵⁰ It does not seem to me, therefore, that another slab or slabs could have been placed immediately next to ours, but, given the attitude of the Virgin and the absence of any other figure or symbol to which her intercession was addressed, one may suppose that there existed a corresponding slab, placed at some distance, on which was carved the image of Christ. Before considering the actual location in the church where such slabs may have been placed, I should like to discuss the composition consisting of the Virgin turned towards Christ.

The description of the mosaics of the church of La Daurade (*Deaurata*) in Toulouse, written by Dom Odon Lamothe in 1663, suggests that this iconographic type originated at an early date, and is as old as, if not older than, the Deesis.⁵¹ In the decoration of La Daurade, which was probably done in the late fifth or early sixth century, on the wall immediately above the altar Christ was represented holding the book of the Gospels with the inscription *Pax vobiscum*; to the right the Virgin turned towards Him, and here the description reads: *Sancta Maria juxta imaginem Salvatoris a capite ad pectus velata, facie admirabili et devota modicum proximam Salvatoris imaginem respiciens*.⁵² Flanking these figures, and extending all round the decagon, were images of the archangels, prophets, and apostles.

The surviving examples of this iconographic type are not older than the

⁴⁸ The slab is 1.04 m. high and 40 cm. wide; the bevelled frame is 4 cm. wide. It has been cut from a larger marble slab which was originally decorated with an ornamental design, and the image of the Virgin has been carved on what was once the back of the panel. As the photograph shows (fig. 7), the design is now incomplete; the foliate interlace of the upper band is interrupted on the left side, and the vertical bar of the rectangular frame around the four concentric lozenges is also missing on the left side. The slab was at one time embedded in a wall or placed against it, for there is still some plaster in the grooves of the ornament.

⁴⁹ H. von der Gabelentz, *Mittelalterliche Plastik in Venedig* (Leipzig, 1903), pp. 137-138, fig. 5.

⁵⁰ For an example of a low frame with parts of the figure carved over the frame, see the Virgin orans and the Archangel in the Berlin Museum: O. Wulff, *Altchristliche und Mittelalterliche byzantinische und italienische Bildwerke*, pt. II (Berlin, 1911), p. 3, nos. 1698-1699. For the relief from Gülhane and kindred examples, see R. Demangel and E. Mamboury, *Le quartier des Manganes et la première région de Constantinople* (Paris, 1939), pl. XIV and Appendix II, pp. 155-161. Other examples of reliefs are reproduced by G. Soteriou, Βυζαντινὰ ἀνάγλυφοι εἰκόνες, *Recueil d'études dédiées à la mémoire de N. P. Kondakov* (Prague, 1920), pp. 125-138.

⁵¹ For the bibliography concerning the early date of the Deesis, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Ivories and Litanies," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V (1942), p. 70, note 4.

⁵² Helen Woodruff, "The Iconography and Date of the Mosaics of La Daurade," *Art Bulletin*, XIII (1931), p. 89 and fig. 2.

eleventh century. We see it on the ivory diptych of the Staatsbibliothek of Bamberg, used as a binding for the prayer book of the Empress Cunegonde, written between the years 1002 and 1012 (fig. 8).⁵³ In the Psalter of the British Museum of the year 1066, Stephen the Younger, one of the victims of Iconoclasm, holds a diptych on which are painted the bust figures of Christ and of the Virgin, turned towards Him.⁵⁴ Stephen the Younger continued to be represented holding this type of diptych, witness a painting in the prothesis of the church of Sopoćani in Yugoslavia. The group of Christ and the interceding Virgin is painted in the upper part of a Byzantine reliquary of the Sancta Sanctorum which may be dated in the twelfth century.⁵⁵ The large mosaic on the east wall of the esonarthex of the Kariye Camii, beneath the southern dome, provides us with an outstanding example of the continued use of this theme in the art of the Palaeologan period (fig. 9).⁵⁶

In monumental art, the interceding Virgin and the full-face Christ are more often represented as separate images and this brings us to the question of the place to which they were assigned. A miniature in a manuscript of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus depicts the interior of a church; on either side of the ciborium are two icons; in the one on the left the bust figure of the Virgin is turned slightly to the right, while the one on the right shows the full-face bust of Christ.⁵⁷ This image reproduces, in a simplified manner, the paintings or mosaics on the western faces of the piers which flanked the arch of the bema, and between which the iconostasis was erected. One of the earliest extant examples is a fresco in the church of Qeledjlar in Cappadocia, dating from the late tenth or early eleventh century. The interceding Virgin, turned to the right, is painted on the north pier of the bema; the corresponding figure on the south pier is now destroyed, but it must have been that of Christ.⁵⁸ In the church of Daphni, near Athens, fragmentary remains of the mosaics which decorated the piers of the bema were discovered in 1955; the upper part of the standing figure of Christ holding the Gospel book can still be seen on the south pier, but only the head of the Virgin turned slightly to the right remains on the north pier.⁵⁹ It is not possible to determine whether or not the interceding type had been represented here, for in the eleventh century the Virgin holding the Child had already sometimes replaced the interceding Virgin, for instance, in the church of the Dormition in Nicaea.⁶⁰ A further change may be observed at Porta

⁵³ Cod. A. II. 55: Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *op. cit.*, II, pl. XXV, fig. 65.

⁵⁴ British Museum, Add. 19.352, fol. 117: A. Grabar *L'iconoclasme*, fig. 141.

⁵⁵ Philippe Lauer, "Le trésor du Sancta Sanctorum," *Monuments Piot*, XV (1906), pl. xiv, 1. C. Cecchelli, "Il tesoro del Laterano," *Dedalo*, VII (1926-27), p. 430.

⁵⁶ Paul A. Underwood, "The Deisis Mosaic in the Kahrie Camii in Istanbul," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), pp. 254-260. *Id.*, "Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955-1956," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), fig. 18 opposite p. 277.

⁵⁷ Sinai, Monastery of Saint Catherine, Cod. gr. 418, fol. 269: John R. Martin, *The Illustration of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus* (Princeton, 1954), fig. 213.

⁵⁸ G. de Jerphanion, *op. cit.*, I, p. 211, pl. 44.2.

⁵⁹ A. K. Orlandos, "Νεώτερα εὐρήματα εἰς τὴν μονὴν Δαφνίου," *Ἀρχεῖον τῶν βυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, VIII (1955-1956), pp. 84-88, figs. 16, 18-19.

⁶⁰ Th. Schmit, *Die Koimesis-Kirche von Nikaia* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927), pls. xxv and xxvii. At the church of Nerez, in the twelfth century, the Virgin Hodegetria is again on the left, the correspond-

Panagia at Trikkala in Greece,⁶¹ and at the Kariye Camii, in Istanbul⁶²; in both instances the Virgin and Child of the Hodegetria type is moved to the south pier and Christ holding the book and blessing is represented on the north pier. In the Parecclesion of the Kariye Camii, the Virgin of the Eleousa type is painted on the south wall of the bema, turned to the left; the painting on the north wall, where the standing Christ must have been depicted, has disappeared.⁶³

The early type, that is the interceding Virgin on the north side of the bema and the full-face Christ on the south side, continued to be represented in Serbian churches, for instance, at Mileševo⁶⁴ and at Arilje⁶⁵ in the thirteenth century, at Mateič⁶⁶ and Staro Nagoričino⁶⁷ in the fourteenth century. At Nagoričino the Virgin is called ἡ κεχαριτωμένη and Christ ὁ ἐλεήμων; in the narthex of Lesnovo the Virgin, depicted on the west face of the northeast pier, has the epithet ἡ παράκλησις; on the southeast pier Christ is enthroned and the inscription reads, ὁ φοβερὸς κριτής.⁶⁸ In the church of Dečani, the Virgin turned to the right, designated as ἡ ἐπίσκοψις, is depicted on the northwest pier, while Christ Pantokrator appears on the southwest pier, standing and holding a sword in His hand.⁶⁹ At Sopoćani, the Virgin and Christ flank the door leading from the exonarthex to the esonarthex.⁷⁰

A variant of this iconographic type may be seen in several Byzantine churches: the interceding Virgin, painted on the north pier of the bema or to the left of the narthex door, and turned towards the corresponding figure of Christ on the south pier of the bema or on the right of the narthex door, holds an open scroll bearing a versified inscription. She is represented thus on the north pier of the bema in the church of the Virgin of Arakos at Lagoudera in Cyprus (fig. 10).⁷¹ In the church of Asinou, also in Cyprus, her image is

ing image on the right is that of Panteleimon, the patron saint of the church: N. L. Okunev, in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, III (1929), pls. I and IV.

⁶¹ A. K. Orlandos, "Ἡ Πόρτα-Παναγία τῆς Θεσσαλίας," *Ἀρχαῖον τῶν βυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, I (1935), pp. 29-33, figs. 14, 20-21.

⁶² P. A. Underwood, "Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955-1956," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), p. 282 f., figs. 16 and 17.

⁶³ P. A. Underwood, "Second Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute, 1955," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 11 (1957), pp. 217-220, figs. 45 and 50.

⁶⁴ N. L. Okunev, "Mileševo. Pamjatnik serbskago iskusstva XIII v.," *Byzantinoslavica*, VII (1937-1938), p. 54. The figure of Christ pl. xvi belongs to the original layer, that of the Virgin is partly covered by a repainting of the sixteenth century.

⁶⁵ N. L. Okunev, "Arilje. Pamjatnik serbskago iskusstva XIII v.," *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VIII (1936), p. 234.

⁶⁶ M. N. Okunev, "Tsrkvasvete Bogoroditze-Mateič," *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva*, 7-8 (1930), p. 111; see diagrams II and III, nos. 85 and 193, and fig. 3. These paintings are on the west face of the north and south piers which support the dome.

⁶⁷ I. Popović and V. R. Petković, *Staro Nagoričino, Psuća, Kalenić* (Belgrade, 1933), p. 34, pls. xi and xxix, 2.

⁶⁸ M. N. Okunev, "Lesnovo," *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves*, I, 2, *Les Balkans* (Paris, 1930), p. 243.

⁶⁹ V. R. Petković and D. Bošković, *Dečani*, pt. II (Belgrade, 1941), pp. 24-25, pls. cliv-clv.

⁷⁰ M. N. Okunev, "Sostav rospisi khrama v Sopoćanakh," *Byzantinoslavica*, I (1929), p. 136, pls. 19-21. These paintings date from the fourteenth century.

⁷¹ A. Stylianou, "Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Παναγίας τοῦ Ἀράκου, Λαγουδερά, Κύπρος," *Acts of the Ninth International Congress of Byzantine Studies held at Saloniki in 1953*, Ἑλληνικά, Suppl. 9.1 (1955), p. 463, pls. 143.1, 154.1. I owe the reproduction and the transcription of the inscription to the kindness of Mr. Stylianou.

painted both on the north pier of the bema and in the narthex.⁷² In the latter, and at Lagoudera she is designated as ἡ ἑλεούσα, although this epithet is usually connected with a different iconographic type. In the church of St. Anne in Trebizond, the interceding Virgin with the scroll painted on the north pier of the bema is called ἡ γοργοεπήκοος;⁷³ she has no distinctive title in the church of the Anargyroi in Kastoria,⁷⁴ but in the church of Saint Nicholas in Salonika, where the Virgin is painted on the north pier of the bema, and in the church of the Transfiguration in the monastery of the Meteora⁷⁵ she is called ἡ παράκλησις. This seems to have been the correct epithet for this iconographic type, and is the one used in the Painter's Guide which also cites the verses that should be inscribed on the scroll. These verses appear, with slight variations, in the majority of extant paintings; they are a dialogue between Christ and the Virgin who asks her Son to have pity on men and to save them in His mercy. The text of the Painter's Guide is as follows:⁷⁶

Ἡ παράκλησις (Ἡ Θεοτόκος) λέγουσα ἐπὶ χάρτου πρὸς τὸν Χριστὸν κόκκινα. “Δέξαι δέησιν τῆς σῆς μητρός, οἰκτίρμων.”

Ὁ Χριστὸς μαῦρα. “Τί, μήτερ, αἰτεῖς;”—“Τὴν βροτῶν σωτηρίαν.”—“Παρώργισάν με.”—“Συμπάθησον, υἱέ μου.”—“Ἄλλ οὐκ ἐπιστρέφουσι” καὶ “Σῶσον χάριν.”

The Serbian artists followed the same models. At Kurbinovo, decorated probably in the twelfth century, the versified dialogue is still written in Greek,⁷⁷ but in the fourteenth century, at Nagoričino, although the epithet ἡ παράκλησις is in Greek, the inscription on the scroll gives us the Serbian translation of the same dialogue.⁷⁸ The same text is repeated on the scroll held by the Virgin at Gračanica and at Dečani, in the painting to the left of the door of the narthex.⁷⁹

⁷² Right Reverend Bishop of Gibraltar, V. Seymour, W. H. Buckler, and Mrs. W. H. Buckler, “The Church of Asinou, Cyprus, and its Frescoes,” *Archaeologia*, LXXXIII (1933), pp. 341, 342, 331, 336; nos. 24 and 35 of diagram VI–VIII, nos. 8 and 9 of diagram II–IV and pl. xcv.2. On the north pier of the bema, the Virgin is accompanied by John the Baptist. The inscription of the scroll, which is said to cover eleven lines, has not been transcribed (*op. cit.*, p. 341); the inscription on the scroll of the Virgin in the narthex reads: λητάς προσάγει μητρικάς ἡ Παρθένος, | τὸ αὐτὸ κομπῇ πρὸς βροτῶν σωτηρίαν (*op. cit.*, p. 336).

⁷³ G. Millet and D. Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Painting at Trebizond* (London, 1936), p. 26 and pl. xiv, 2. There are two layers of painting; the epithet and the versified inscription belong to the upper layer and were deciphered by G. Millet. On the south pier of the bema, there is an image of John the Baptist instead of the customary one of Christ.

⁷⁴ S. Pelikanides, *Καστοριά* (Salonika, 1953), pl. 28.

⁷⁵ G. A. Soteriou, “Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Θεσσαλίας ΙΓ’ καὶ ΙΔ’ αἰῶνος,” *Ἑπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, IX (1932), p. 402 and fig. 23.

⁷⁶ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης* (St. Petersburg, 1909), p. 280. See a slightly different version in *Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina*, III, edited by E. Cougny (Paris, 1927), p. 423, no. 125.

⁷⁷ R. Ljubinković, “Stara tsrkva sela Kurbinova,” *Starinar*, XV (1940), p. 104. Here the Virgin is painted on the wall, under the window, next to the monumental figure of Christ represented on the south side of the bema, while on the corresponding north side there is an equally monumental image of Saint George, the patron saint of the church. *Ibid.*, pp. 103–104, 107 and fig. 4.

⁷⁸ N. P. Kondakov, *Ikonografija*, II, p. 304, fig. 170. I. Popović and V. R. Petković, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–38 and pl. vi. M. N. Okunev, *Monumenta artis serbicae*, I (Prague, 1928), pl. 10. At Gračanica and in several other churches: M. N. Okunev, *op. cit.*, in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VIII (1936), pp. 234–235 and *id.*, in *L’art byzantin chez les Slaves*, I, 2, p. 256.

⁷⁹ For Gračanica and other Serbian examples, see M. N. Okunev, *op. cit.*, in *L’art byzantin chez les Slaves*, I, 2, p. 256 and in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VIII (1936), pp. 234–235. For Dečani, see Petković and Bošković, *op. cit.*, pt. II, p. 2, pls. xcvi and cxxi, 2.

The consistency with which the same text is repeated in Greek and in Serbian in the majority of surviving paintings⁸⁰ suggests that this variant of the Hagiosoritissa is also derived from a famous model, probably an icon which was reproduced in panel paintings as well as in monumental art. As in the case of the Hagiosoritissa, the panel paintings depict sometimes the full-length, sometimes the half-length figure of the Virgin, with or without the bust of Christ in the segment of the sky.

Both types are preserved in outstanding examples of the twelfth century. The full-length figure appears on the icon which, according to tradition, was painted for the Grand Duke Andrew Bogoliubski after a vision he had in 1158, when the Virgin appeared to him holding a scroll in her hand, and ordered him to have her portrait painted and deposited in a church built in her honor.⁸¹ This icon, unfortunately in a very poor state of preservation but in which one can still recognize a painting of high artistic quality, represents the Virgin holding the open scroll in her left hand and raising her right hand towards the bust of Christ in the upper right corner of the panel. A Deesis, with two accompanying angels is painted on the upper frame of the icon.⁸² A painting in the palace of Andrew Bogoliubski at Bogoliubovo probably recalls this vision, for the prince is shown kneeling before the Virgin depicted in the same attitude as on the icon.⁸³ The Bogoliubski icon was frequently copied in later centuries, sometimes exactly repeating the twelfth-century model, and sometimes adding a group of worshippers kneeling before the Virgin.⁸⁴

The best example of the half-length figure is the celebrated icon of the cathedral of Spoleto on which the Virgin turned to the right holds the scroll with the usual versified dialogue. This painting known only through engravings⁸⁵ can now be fully appreciated, for, at the request of Silvio Mercati, the icon was taken out of its Gothic tabernacle, the metal cover was removed, the painting

⁸⁰ The interceding Virgin holding a scroll is also represented in the church of Saint Elias in Salonika, to the left of the door leading from the narthex to the church, but I was not able to copy the text of the inscription; the painting to the right of the door is destroyed. In the church of Saint Demetrius in Salonika we see a variant of this type: the Virgin stands next to the "orans" figure of a saint, probably Saint Theodore, while Christ appears above them, in the segment of the sky. The inscription is an abbreviated and modified form of the usual verses. G. and M. Soteriou, *Ἡ βασιλικὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης* (Athens, 1952), pp. 194-195 and pl. 66. In the Serbian church of Peć we find a further variant: on the face of a pier, halfway up the north side of the nave, the Virgin holding the scroll stands full face and carries, at the same time, the infant Christ on her arm; Christ is represented on the opposite pier on the south wall.

⁸¹ *Istoriya russkogo iskusstva*, I (Moscow, 1953), p. 446.

⁸² *Ibid.*, reproductions on pp. 445 and 446. Lasareff, *loc. cit.*, writes that because of the poor condition of the icon it is not possible to determine whether it is the work of Byzantine or Russian painters. The inscription on the scroll apparently could not be deciphered and one cannot see from the reproduction whether the text is written in Greek or Slavonic. The inscription on the silver *riza* which was added much later is in Slavonic and differs from the versified dialogue. Kondakov, *Ikonografija*, II, p. 300, fig. 166. A Greek icon, brought to Kiev from Mount Sinai shows the standing Virgin with the scroll bearing the usual text. N. P. Kondakov, *Ikony Sinajskoj i Afonskoj Kolektsii* (St. Petersburg, 1902), pl. viii.

⁸³ K. K. Romanov, "La colonnade du pourtour de la Cathédrale de Saint-Georges à Jur'ev-Pol'skij," *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves*, II, 1, p. 57, fig. 28.

⁸⁴ P. P. Pokrysh'kin, *Ikony Moskovskago Pridvornago Sobora Spasa na Boru* (St. Petersburg, 1913), pls. vii-x. N. P. Kondakov, *The Russian Icon. Album* (Prague, 1929), pl. 73.

⁸⁵ N. P. Likhachev, *op. cit.*, fig. 95; N. P. Kondakov, *Ikonografija*, II, fig. 169.

was cleaned, and a color reproduction was published (fig. 11).⁸⁶ Mercati was able, at the same time, to identify the person for whom the icon was made: she was Irene Petraliphina, a descendant of Petrus de Alipha (from Alifa in Campania) the companion of Robert Guiscard who, after the latter's death in 1085, entered the service of the Byzantine Emperor. The icon can, therefore, be dated a few decades after 1085 but before 1185 when, according to a charter, Frederick Barbarossa presented it to the cathedral of Spoleto; it is one of the finest works of the Comnenian period. As another example of this type one may mention an icon of the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, even though the iambic verses inscribed on the scroll are somewhat different from the usual dialogue.⁸⁷ Exceptionally, on one of the icons of the same monastery, the Virgin is shown holding a scroll in the representation of the Deesis, and the words written on it refer to the well-known dialogue.⁸⁸

Apart from the Serbian paintings mentioned above, we have further evidence that there existed in Serbia an icon of the interceding Virgin holding a scroll which was the object of particular veneration. The paintings in the chapel to the south of the narthex in the Church of the Mother of God at Studenica and those of the corresponding chapel at Sopoćani show the translation of the body of Stephen Nemanja who relinquished the throne and became a monk under the name of Simeon (fig. 12). In both frescoes the group of clerics proceeding from the monastery to meet the procession carries, in great pomp, an icon on which is depicted the half figure of the Virgin, in this instance, turned to the left and holding an open scroll in her hand.⁸⁹

The interceding Virgin was also chosen for dedicatory portraits or for commemorative monuments. At the Martorana, in Sicily, George of Antioch who had built this church in honor of the Virgin in 1143, kneels before the Virgin who holds an open scroll in her left hand. Here the inscription is adapted to the special circumstances for which the mosaic was made; the Virgin addressing herself to Christ, whose image appears in the segment of sky in the upper right corner of the panel, asks Him to protect and grant forgiveness to George who erected this house for her.⁹⁰ In a Lectionary dated 1061-1062 in the Library of the Greek Patriarchate in Jerusalem (Megale Panagia, fol. 1v) and in a twelfth-century manuscript in the monastery of Lavra on Mount Athos, no. 103A, fol. 3 (fig. 13), the person for whom the manuscript was written kneels in the same manner at the feet of the Virgin who raises both hands to the hand of God or the bust figure of Christ painted in the upper left corner of the page.⁹¹

⁸⁶ S. Mercati, "Sulla sanctissima icone del Duomo di Spoleto," *Spoletium*, 3 (1956), pp. 3-6.

⁸⁷ Soteriou, *op. cit.*, I, pl. 173; II, p. 160.

⁸⁸ Soteriou, *op. cit.*, I, pl. 170; II, p. 156.

⁸⁹ G. Millet, *La peinture du Moyen Age en Yougoslavie. Album présenté par A. Frolow*, I (Paris, 1954), pl. 44, 1; II (Paris, 1957), pl. 43.2. D. Winfield, "Four Historical Compositions from the Mediaeval Kingdom of Serbia," *Byzantinoslavica*, XIX (1958), pp. 251-278, figs. 3, 4. Winfield writes that "the inscription on the scroll at Studenica has entirely disappeared, and of the inscription at Sopoćani too little is left to decipher" (*op. cit.*, p. 258), but the paintings were probably in a better state of preservation when Okunev saw them, for he says that the inscription on the scroll is the Virgin's dialogue with Christ (*op. cit.*, in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VIII [1936], p. 234).

⁹⁰ O. Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (London, 1949), pl. 58b; see the inscription on p. 90.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 348. A photograph of this miniature was kindly lent to me by Mr. O. Demus.

The dedicatory inscriptions written on the gold background again differ from the usual one, but the versified dialogue between the Virgin and Christ reappears on an icon of the seventeenth century from Mount Athos. This example, though of very late date, is particularly interesting because it shows the double image of the Virgin and Christ: on one panel was represented Jesse, the son of the Georgian Prince Asotan, kneeling before the Virgin who held the scroll with the usual text, while on the other appeared Christ to Whom the Virgin's prayer was addressed, and at His feet knelt the Prince Asotan.⁹² This double icon with the two kneeling figures calls to mind the beautiful mosaic of the inner narthex of the Kariye Camii, already mentioned, for here also, although the Virgin does not hold a scroll, she obviously intercedes before Christ for the sebastocrator Isaac Comnenus and the nun Melane kneeling on either side (fig. 9).⁹³

The above survey of the principal monuments in which the companion images of the Virgin and Christ have been depicted, shows that they were usually placed on the bema piers or at the sides of the narthex door. Thus before entering the nave, while he was still in the vestibule where certain liturgical ceremonies were held, the faithful had before his eyes the comforting image of the interceding Virgin; this same image was moreover placed in the most prominent part of the church, at the entrance of the sanctuary. Whether she appeared holding the scroll on which her entreaty was inscribed, or merely stood turned towards Christ and raising her hands in prayer, this image emphasized the supreme role of the Virgin as intercessor, as the mediatrix between man and Christ.

Many of the representations on the bema piers belong to the period prior to the development of the iconostasis; to the time when the chancel barrier was a simple marble structure, with columns supporting a decorative architrave and ornamental slabs in the lower part of the intercolumniations. There were few, if any, permanent icons on this chancel barrier, and this fact brought into even greater prominence these two images which stood, like large icons, on the bema piers.

If, as I have suggested, the Dumbarton Oaks relief had, originally, a corresponding slab with the figure of Christ, these two could have been set in the bema piers or in the east wall of the narthex, on either side of the door. The size of the marble slab, measuring only 1.04 metres, is considerably smaller than similar representations in mosaic or painting, which are usually life-size figures or even slightly taller. But all the examples mentioned above belong to fairly large churches and we may suppose that the stone relief was once placed in a small chapel.⁹⁴

⁹² G. Millet, J. Pargoire, and L. Petit, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Athos* (Paris, 1904), p. 91, no. 285.

⁹³ P. A. Underwood, *op. cit.*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), pp. 284-287 and fig. 18.

⁹⁴ The size of the relief is approximately the same as that of the marble slabs in the intercolumniations of an iconostasis, but all surviving examples of such slabs have a decorative design—crosses, floral or geometric ornaments, or animals. One cannot entirely exclude the possibility that our relief may have been a single "icon," which, in that case, could have been placed in any part of a church.

The stone "icons" of the Virgin now known represent her in the orans attitude or with the Child in her arms; single slabs are part of a composition like the Deesis group at San Marco, already mentioned, or the Annunciation embedded in the façade of the church of San Giovanni and San Paolo in Venice. A fragmentary relief discovered at Arta shows a feminine figure turned to the left, and with the left hand raised; but as the head is not preserved one cannot be sure that it represented the Virgin.⁹⁵ Thus the Dumbarton Oaks relief is the only surviving sculptured image of the interceding Virgin so frequently represented in mosaics, paintings, and in the minor arts.

⁹⁵ A. Orlandos, "Ἡ παρὰ τὴν Ἀρτὸν μονὴ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν," Ἀρχεῖον τῶν βυζ. μνημ. τῆς Ἑλλάδος, II (1936), p. 41, fig. 39. Orlandos assigns this relief to the thirteenth century and sees in it influences of Romanesque art.



1. Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Ivory Plaque. The Virgin between John the Baptist and St. Basil



2. Dumbarton Oaks Collection.
Bloodstone Cameo with
Bust of the Virgin



3. Dumbarton Oaks Collection.
Seal of the Virgin Hagioritissa



4. Mt. Athos, Pantocrator Monastery,
no. 49, fol. 4v



5. Berlin-Dahlem, Ehem. Staatliche Museen.
Ivory Triptych, detail



6. Front View



7. Back View

Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Marble Relief of the Virgin



8. Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek. Ivory Binding for the Prayer Book of the Empress Cunegonde



9. Istanbul, Kariye Camii, Inner Narthex. Mosaic



10. Lagoudera, Cyprus. Church of the Virgin of Arakos



11. Spoleto, Cathedral. Icon of the Virgin



12. Sopoćani, southwest Chapel.
Translation of the Body of Stephen Nemanja



13. Mt. Athos, Lavra Monastery, no. 103A, fol. 3